

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2026

THE HONORABLE KRISTI NOEM

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

245 Murray Lane, SW

Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

We write to express our concerns about the recent increase to H-1B filing fees and the significant impact this will have on the recruitment of healthcare workers, particularly in rural, frontier, and medically underserved areas. Workforce shortages remain one of the most pressing challenges facing rural America, and Congress has long worked on a bipartisan basis to support healthcare facilities that struggle to recruit and retain clinicians. We respectfully request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), exercise its authority to establish a categorical exemption or waiver from these fees for healthcare workers.

Safety-net hospitals, rural health clinics, community health centers, long-term care providers, and other essential healthcare facilities have faced persistent workforce shortages for decades. The Health Resources and Services Administration has designated thousands of primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas across the United States, and nearly two-thirds of these federally identified shortage areas are located in rural communities — a clear indication of the persistent and disproportionate provider deficits confronting rural America.

The H-1B program has become a critical tool for filling these workforce gaps, supporting employers who cannot otherwise find qualified U.S. workers by authorizing the temporary employment of foreign-trained professionals. From 2016 through 2022, USCIS processed 76,085 physician H-1B petitions, and approximately 8,349—about 11 percent—served in rural counties. In 2025 alone, 564 rural employers relied on H-1B visas, bringing 534 new clinicians to their facilities and retaining 422 continuing practitioners. These clinicians are essential to sustaining access to care in rural America.

The dramatic increase in H-1B filing fees instituted under the September 19, 2025, presidential proclamation imposes a financial burden on rural providers that many cannot absorb. Under the new rule, employers seeking to sponsor a foreign professional who is outside the U.S. must pay a one-time fee of \$100,000 to submit a petition beginning September 21, 2025. Previously, rural healthcare facilities often faced filing fees in the modest range of \$460 to \$1,000. These

facilities, which already operate on limited margins, now risk having their recruitment pipelines constricted, further reducing the availability of care in rural and underserved areas.

In addition, while the proclamation allows for case-by-case waivers under a “national interest” exemption, such waivers are discretionary, administratively burdensome, and unpredictable. For small rural hospitals and clinics operating on thin or negative margins, the uncertainty and up-front costs alone are prohibitive. With no categorical exemption, many facilities are being forced to pause or completely abandon recruitment of critically needed healthcare workers.

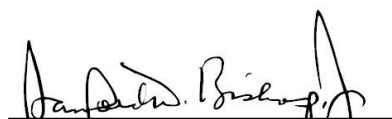
Therefore, we strongly urge DHS to exercise its authority to establish a blanket H-1B fee exemption for healthcare workers. Such an exemption would remove unnecessary financial barriers, help ensure that highly qualified clinicians remain available to serve in the United States, and support continued access to essential healthcare services in rural communities.

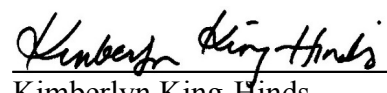
Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We stand ready to work with you and the Department to ensure that rural Americans continue to have reliable access to the healthcare they need and that providers are able to continue delivering essential services in their communities.

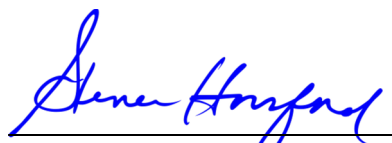
Sincerely,


Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress

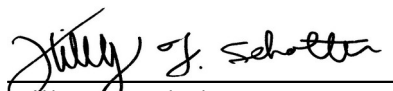

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

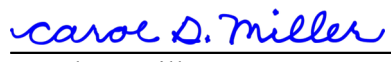

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

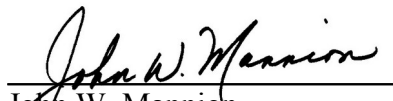

Kimberlyn King-Hinds
Member of Congress


Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

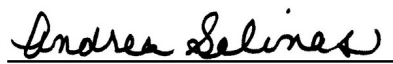

James C. Moylan
Member of Congress


Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress

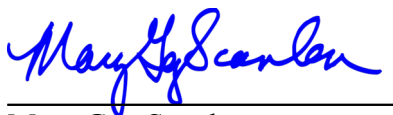

Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress


John W. Mannion
Member of Congress

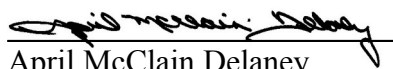

Jeff Hurd
Member of Congress

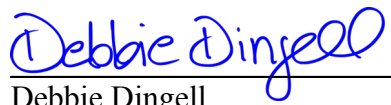

Andrea Salinas
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SETH MOULTON
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Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

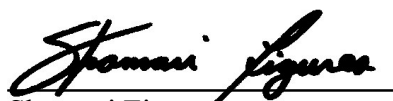

Raja Krishnamoorthi
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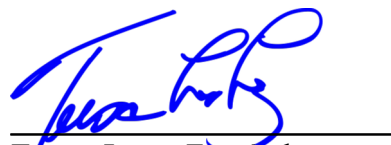

April McClain Delaney
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Teresa Leger Fernandez
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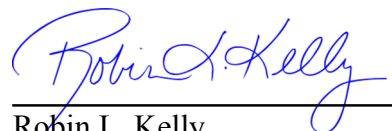
Becca Balint
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